

Vandalism

864 in 1999 • 904 in 2000 • Up 5%

Vandalism, or malicious destruction of property, includes tire-slashing, window smashing, spray-painting, and myriad other crimes in which someone's property is willfully and maliciously damaged or destroyed. It is the most commonly reported crime in Cambridge. Despite these high numbers, we suspect that vandalism is one of the most underreported crimes; residents and businesses frequently ignore "minor" incidents of vandalism and graffiti.

Vandalism usually falls into one of three categories: 1) juveniles looking for a thrill, including "taggers" or graffiti "artists"; 2) revenge-motivated incidents, including neighbor and landlord/tenant disputes and traffic and parking disputes; and 3) botched attempts to break into a car (i.e., the window is smashed or the door lock is broken, but nothing is taken).

Vandalism by Neighborhood

Neighborhood	1998	1999	2000	Change 99-00
East Cambridge	90	131	91	-30%
MIT	10	12	23	+92%
Inman/Harrington	48	80	63	-21%
Area 4	92	100	129	+29%
Cambridgeport	92	79	97	+23%
Mid-Cambridge	76	77	90	+17%
Riverside	69	92	89	-3%
Agassiz	22	19	30	+57%
Peabody	72	71	57	-19%
West Cambridge	74	55	73	+32%
North Cambridge	94	108	105	-3%
Highlands	34	13	26	+100%
Strawberry Hill	14	22	31	+41%
TOTAL	789	864	904	+5%

As 63% of all vandalism occurs to automobiles, this crime is likely to strike high-population residential areas and high-traffic commercial areas. Hence, the higher totals in Area 4, North Cambridge, East Cambridge, Riverside, and Cambridgeport.

Several neighborhoods have seen increases in vandalism in 2000. Among the patterns of vandalism identified by the Crime Analysis Unit in 2000:

- **East Cambridge** had a series of tire slashings on Sciarappa Street in late February, occasional problems with taggers on lower Cambridge Street.
- **Inman/Harrington** had a persistent problem with juveniles in the Market Street area smashing car windows and throwing rocks at residences.
- **Mid-Cambridge** had several tagging incidents and domestic disputes, involving damage to the victim's car, house or place of work. A pattern of vandalism to cars emerged in October.

- **North Cambridge** had a 3% decline in vandalism in 2000, but a nagging problem with taggers on Richdale Ave remains a nuisance to businesses in this area.
- **Cambridgeport** had a spree of malicious destruction incidents to cars on Pleasant, Kelly, and River Streets that was a persistent problem throughout 2000. The motivation surrounding the majority of these incidents appears to be disagreements over parking spaces among neighbors.

Categorical Breakdown of Vandalism

Category	1999	2000
Car window smashed	216	193
Dents/other damage to car	186	214
Tires slashed or punctured	85	104
Scratches, "pinstripes"	67	62
Total Damage to Autos	554	573
Misc. damage at residences	66	60
Window of residence smashed	42	58
Total Damage to Residences	108	118
Window of business smashed	63	60
Misc. damage to businesses	30	53
Total Damage to Businesses	93	113
Graffiti	109	105

As with other crimes, graffiti incidents probably reflect greater reporting than actual occurrences. Efforts of the city's Graffiti Hotline and Graffiti Task Force seem to be paying off with both increased awareness and increased removal of graffiti from public and private buildings.

The graffiti hotline, incidentally, can be reached at **349-INFO**. You can call to:

- Report existing graffiti
- Provide information to help apprehend "taggers"
- Get information about removal supplies and techniques for graffiti on your property
- Get information about community clean-up days.